

# IP Captioned Telephone Service

## FCC Consumer Facts

### Background

Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) allows persons with hearing or speech disabilities to place and receive telephone calls. A communications assistant (CA) relays the call back and forth between the person with a hearing or speech disability and a voice telephone user. For example, a person with a hearing disability can communicate in text with the CA, while the CA communicates by voice with the other party to the call. The CA repeats in voice what the user has typed, and types to the TRS user what the voice telephone user has said.

There are several types of TRS that consumers can use depending on the nature of the disability and whether they have some hearing and can speak. TRS types include traditional TRS, which uses a text telephone or TTY device and a telephone line, Speech-to-Speech (STS), and Captioned Telephone Service, as well as forms of TRS that use the Internet, specifically IP Relay, and Video Relay Service (VRS). Internet Protocol (IP) Captioned Telephone Service is one of the newest forms of TRS. For a description of the various types of TRS, see our consumer fact sheet at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/trs.html>.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently ruled that all IP Captioned Telephone Service calls could be compensated from the Interstate TRS Fund. Like all TRS calls, the relay costs associated with IP Captioned Telephone Service are not paid by users. The FCC does not mandate the provision of IP Captioned Telephone Service, and, given the way the service works, exempts it from certain minimum mandatory standards for TRS, such as emergency 911 service, three-way calling, and speed dialing.

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### How IP Captioned Telephone Service Works

IP Captioned Telephone Service is essentially a combination of two other forms of TRS, Captioned Telephone Service and IP Relay. Captioned Telephone Service uses a special telephone that has a text screen to display captions of what the other party to the conversation is saying. It allows a person with hearing loss, but who wants to use his or her own voice, to speak directly to the called party and then listen, to the extent possible, to the other party and simultaneously read captions of what the other party is saying. Unlike traditional TRS, which uses typed text, the CA repeats or revoices what is said, and speech recognition technology automatically transcribes the CA's voice into text transmitted directly to the user's captioned telephone text display.

### How IP Captioned Telephone Service Works (cont'd.)

IP Relay is a text-based form of TRS. The CA voices what the IP Relay user has typed, and types to the user what the other party to the call has said. Unlike traditional TRS, however, the first leg of a call – the text – goes from the caller's computer or other Web-enabled device to the IP Relay center via the Internet, rather than the regular telephone network. To begin a call, the user accesses an IP Relay provider via a Web page. As with traditional TRS, the second leg of the IP Relay call, from the CA to the called party, uses the voice telephone network. For more information on IP Relay, see our consumer fact sheet at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/iprelay.html>.

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## How IP Captioned Telephone Service Works (cont'd.)

IP Captioned Telephone Service uses the Internet, rather than the telephone network, to provide the captions of what the other party is saying. Although this service can be provided in a variety of ways, the user (who generally can speak and has some residual hearing) may make a voice to voice call to another party on a standard telephone using the normal telephone network. The called party's response is directed from the user's telephone to a personal computer or similar device that routes it to the IP Captioned Telephone Service provider via the Internet. The provider then sends back to the user's computer the text of what was spoken. As a result, the user can both hear, to the extent possible, the called party's response over the normal telephone network, and simultaneously read the text routed via the Internet to the user's computer or similar device.

## Benefits of IP Captioned Telephone Service

IP Captioned Telephone Service allows consumers to use a computer or similar device, rather than a specialized captioned telephone, to make captioned telephone calls. As a result, the service can become more widely available to consumers. In addition, it takes advantage of the increased availability of computers and Internet connections in the work place to permit persons with hearing loss

## Benefits of IP Captioned Telephone Service (cont'd.)

to more effectively use the telephone in their jobs. Further, captions can be displayed on a computer screen in large text, variable fonts, and color, thus accommodating a wider group of disabled users, including individuals with hearing disabilities who also have low vision.

## Complaints or More Information

To file a complaint about lack of or improperly functioning TRS, you can use our electronic complaint form found at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html>. You can also e-mail your complaint to our Consumer Center at [fccinfo@fcc.gov](mailto:fccinfo@fcc.gov); call the Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; or fax your complaint to 1-866-418-0232. Finally, you can mail your complaint to:

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554.

Our Consumer Center can also answer any additional questions you may have about IP captioned telephone service, TRS, or other telecommunications issues. You can also visit our Disability Rights Office Web site at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro) to learn more about FCC programs to promote access to telecommunications services for the disabled.

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*To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/>.*

*This fact sheet is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.*

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Federal Communications Commission ■ Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau ■ 445 12th St., SW ■ Washington, DC 20554  
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